



# SAMSON AGONISTES

JOHN MILTON





# **SAMSON AGONISTES: A Dramatic Poem**

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## Of that sort of Dramatic Poem which is call'd Tragedy.

TRAGEDY, as it was antiently compos'd, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other Poems: therefore said by Aristotle to be of power by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions, that is to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirr'd up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is Nature wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion: for so in Physic things of melancholic hue and quality are us'd against melancholy, sowr against sowr, salt to remove salt humours. Hence Philosophers and other gravest Writers, as Cicero, Plutarch and others, frequently cite out of Tragic Poets, both to adorn and illustrate thir discourse. The Apostle Paul himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of Euripides into the Text of Holy Scripture, I Cor. 15. 33. and Paraeus commenting on the Revelation, divides the whole Book as a Tragedy, into Acts distinguisht each by a Chorus of Heavenly Harpings and Song between. Heretofore Men in highest dignity have labour'd not a little to be thought able to compose a Tragedy. Of that honour Dionysius the elder was no less ambitious, then before of his attaining to the Tyranny. Augustus Caesar also had begun his Ajax, but unable to please his own judgment with what he had begun, left it unfinisht. Seneca the Philosopher is by some thought the Author of those Tragedies (at lest the best of them) that go under that name. Gregory Nazianzen a Father of the Church, thought it not unbeseeming the sanctity of his person to write a Tragedy which he entitl'd, Christ suffering. This is mention'd to vindicate Tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day with other common Interludes;



hap'ning through the Poets error of intermixing Comic stuff with Tragic sadness and gravity; or introducing trivial and vulgar persons, which by all judicious hath bin counted absurd; and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratifie the people. And though antient Tragedy use no Prologue, yet using sometimes, in case of self defence, or explanation, that which Martial calls an Epistle; in behalf of this Tragedy coming forth after the antient manner, much different from what among us passes for best, thus much before-hand may be Epistl'd; that Chorus is here introduc'd after the Greek manner, not antient only but modern, and still in use among the Italians. In the modelling therefore of this Poem with good reason, the Antients and Italians are rather follow'd, as of much more authority and fame. The measure of Verse us'd in the Chorus is of all sorts, call'd by the Greeks Monostrophic, or rather Apolelymenon, without regard had to Strophe, Antistrophe or Epod, which were a kind of Stanza's fram'd only for the Music, then us'd with the Chorus that sung; not essential to the Poem, and therefore not material; or being divided into Stanza's or Pauses they may be call'd Allaeostropha. Division into Act and Scene referring chiefly to the Stage (to which this work never was intended) is here omitted.

It suffices if the whole Drama be found not produc't beyond the fift Act, of the style and uniformitie, and that commonly call'd the Plot, whether intricate or explicit, which is nothing indeed but such oeconomy, or disposition of the fable as may stand best with verisimilitude and decorum; they only will best judge who are not unacquainted with Aeschulus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the three Tragic Poets unequall'd yet by any, and the best rule to all who endeavour to write Tragedy. The circumscription of time wherein the whole Drama begins and ends, is according to antient rule, and best example, within the space of 24 hours.

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## The Argument.

Samson made Captive, Blind, and now in the Prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common work-house, on a Festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open Air, to a place nigh, somewhat retir'd there to sit a while and bemoan his condition. Where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his tribe, which make the Chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can; then by his old Father Manoa, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom; lastly, that this Feast was proclaim'd by the Philistins as a day of Thanksgiving for thir deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoa then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistian Lords for Samson's redemption; who in the mean while is visited by other persons; and lastly by a publick Officer to require coming to the Feast before the Lords and People, to play or shew his strength in thir presence; he at first refuses, dismissing the publick officer with absolute denial to come; at length perswaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatnings to fetch him; the Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoa returns full of joyful hope, to procure e're long his Sons deliverance: in the midst of which discourse an Ebrew comes in haste confusedly at first; and afterward more distinctly relating the Catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistins, and by accident to himself; wherewith the Tragedy ends.

The Persons

Samson.

Manoa the father of Samson.



Dalila his wife.  
Harapha of Gath.  
Publick Officer.

Messenger.

Chorus of Danites

The Scene before the Prison in Gaza.

Sam: A little onward lend thy guiding hand  
To these dark steps, a little further on;  
For yonder bank hath choice of Sun or shade,  
There I am wont to sit, when any chance  
Relieves me from my task of servile toyl,  
Daily in the common Prison else enjoyn'd me,  
Where I a Prisoner chain'd, scarce freely draw  
The air imprison'd also, close and damp,  
Unwholsom draught: but here I feel amends,  
The breath of Heav'n fresh-blowing, pure and sweet, 10  
With day-spring born; here leave me to respire.  
This day a solemn Feast the people hold  
To Dagon thir Sea-Idol, and forbid  
Laborious works, unwillingly this rest  
Thir Superstition yields me; hence with leave  
Retiring from the popular noise, I seek  
This unfrequented place to find some ease,  
Ease to the body some, none to the mind  
From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm  
Of Hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone, 20  
But rush upon me thronging, and present  
Times past, what once I was, and what am now.  
O wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold  
Twice by an Angel, who at last in sight  
Of both my Parents all in flames ascended  
From off the Altar, where an Off'ring burn'd,  
As in a fiery column charioting  
His Godlike presence, and from some great act

Or benefit reveal'd to Abraham's race?  
Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd 30  
As of a person separate to God,  
Design'd for great exploits; if I must dye  
Betray'd, Captiv'd, and both my Eyes put out,  
Made of my Enemies the scorn and gaze;  
To grind in Brazen Fetters under task  
With this Heav'n-gifted strength? O glorious strength  
Put to the labour of a Beast, debas't  
Lower then bondslave! Promise was that I  
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver;  
Ask for this great Deliverer now, and find him 40  
Eyeless in Gaza at the Mill with slaves,  
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke;  
Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt  
Divine Prediction; what if all foretold  
Had been fulfilld but through mine own default,  
Whom have I to complain of but my self?  
Who this high gift of strength committed to me,  
In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft me,  
Under the Seal of silence could not keep,  
But weakly to a woman must reveal it 50  
O'recome with importunity and tears.  
O impotence of mind, in body strong!  
But what is strength without a double share  
Of wisdom, vast, unwieldy, burdensom,  
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall  
By weakest suttleties, not made to rule,  
But to subserve where wisdom bears command.  
God, when he gave me strength, to shew withal  
How slight the gift was, hung it in my Hair.  
But peace, I must not quarrel with the will 60  
Of highest dispensation, which herein  
Happ'ly had ends above my reach to know:  
Suffices that to me strength is my bane,

And proves the source of all my miseries;  
 So many, and so huge, that each apart  
 Would ask a life to wail, but chief of all,  
 O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!  
 Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,  
 Dungeon, or beggery, or decrepit age!  
 Light the prime work of God to me is extinct,  
 And all her various objects of delight  
 Annull'd, which might in part my grief have eas'd,  
 Inferiour to the vilest now become  
 Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me,  
 They creep, yet see, I dark in light expos'd  
 To daily fraud, contempt, abuse and wrong,  
 Within doors, or without, still as a fool,  
 In power of others, never in my own;  
 Scarce half I seem to live, dead more then half.  
 O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon, 80  
 Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse  
 Without all hope of day!  
 O first created Beam, and thou great Word,  
 Let there be light, and light was over all;  
 Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree?  
 The Sun to me is dark  
 And silent as the Moon,  
 When she deserts the night  
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.  
 Since light so necessary is to life, 90  
 And almost life itself, if it be true  
 That light is in the Soul,  
 She all in every part; why was the sight  
 To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd?  
 So obvious and so easie to be quench't,  
 And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,  
 That she might look at will through every pore?  
 Then had I not been thus exil'd from light;



As in the land of darkness yet in light,  
To live a life half dead, a living death, 100  
And buried; but O yet more miserable!  
My self, my Sepulcher, a moving Grave,  
Buried, yet not exempt  
By priviledge of death and burial  
From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs,  
But made hereby obnoxious more  
To all the miseries of life,  
Life in captivity  
Among inhuman foes.  
But who are these? for with joint pace I hear 110  
The tread of many feet stearing this way;  
Perhaps my enemies who come to stare  
At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,  
Thir daily practice to afflict me more.

Chor: This, this is he; softly a while,  
Let us not break in upon him;  
O change beyond report, thought, or belief!  
See how he lies at random, carelessly diffus'd,  
With languish't head unpropt,  
As one past hope, abandon'd 120  
And by himself given over;  
In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds  
O're worn and soild;  
Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be hee,  
That Heroic, that Renown'd,  
Irresistible Samson? whom unarm'd  
No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast could withstand;  
Who tore the Lion, as the Lion tears the Kid,  
Ran on embattelld Armies clad in Iron,  
And weaponless himself, 130  
Made Arms ridiculous, useless the forgery  
Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer'd Cuirass,

Chalybean temper'd steel, and frock of mail  
 Adamantean Proof;  
 But safest he who stood aloof,  
 When insupportably his foot advanc't,  
 In scorn of thir proud arms and warlike tools,  
 Spurn'd them to death by Troops. The bold Ascalonite  
 Fled from his Lion ramp, old Warriors turn'd  
 Thir plated backs under his heel; 140  
 Or grovling soild thir crested helmets in the dust.  
 Then with what trivial weapon came to Hand,  
 The Jaw of a dead Ass, his sword of bone,  
 A thousand fore-skins fell, the flower of Palestin  
 In Ramath-lechi famous to this day:  
 Then by main force pull'd up, and on his shoulders bore  
 The Gates of Azza, Post, and massie Bar  
 Up to the Hill by Hebron, seat of Giants old,  
 No journey of a Sabbath day, and loaded so;  
 Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up Heav'n. 150  
 Which shall I first bewail,  
 Thy Bondage or lost Sight,  
 Prison within Prison  
 Inseparably dark?  
 Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!)  
 The Dungeon of thy self; thy Soul  
 (Which Men enjoying sight oft without cause complain)  
 Imprison'd now indeed,  
 In real darkness of the body dwells,  
 Shut up from outward light 160  
 To incorporate with gloomy night;  
 For inward light alas  
 Puts forth no visual beam.  
 O mirror of our fickle state,  
 Since man on earth unparallel'd!  
 The rarer thy example stands,  
 By how much from the top of wondrous glory,

Strongest of mortal men,  
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fall'n.  
For him I reckon not in high estate 170  
Whom long descent of birth  
Or the spear of fortune raises;  
But thee whose strength, while vertue was her mate  
Might have subdu'd the Earth,  
Universally crown'd with highest praises.

Sam: I hear the sound of words, thir sense the air  
Dissolves unjointed e're it reach my ear.

Chor: Hee speaks, let us draw nigh. Matchless in might,  
The glory late of Israel, now the grief;  
We come thy friends and neighbours not unknown 180  
From Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful Vale  
To visit or bewail thee, or if better,  
Counsel or Consolation we may bring,  
Salve to thy Sores, apt words have power to swage  
The tumors of a troubl'd mind,  
And are as Balm to fester'd wounds.

Sam: Your coming, Friends, revives me, for I learn  
Now of my own experience, not by talk,  
How counterfeit a coin they are who friends  
Bear in their Superscription (of the most 190  
I would be understood) in prosperous days  
They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head  
Not to be found, though sought. Wee see, O friends.  
How many evils have enclos'd me round;  
Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me,  
Blindness, for had I sight, confus'd with shame,  
How could I once look up, or heave the head,  
Who like a foolish Pilot have shipwrack't,  
My Vessel trusted to me from above,



Gloriously rigg'd; and for a word, a tear, 200  
Fool, have divulg'd the secret gift of God  
To a deceitful Woman: tell me Friends,  
Am I not sung and proverbd for a Fool  
In every street, do they not say, how well  
Are come upon him his deserts? yet why?  
Immeasurable strength they might behold  
In me, of wisdom nothing more then mean;  
This with the other should, at least, have paird,  
These two proportiond ill drove me transverse.

Chor: Tax not divine disposal, wisest Men 210  
Have err'd, and by bad Women been deceiv'd;  
And shall again, pretend they ne're so wise.  
Deject not then so overmuch thy self,  
Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides;  
Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder  
Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather  
Then of thine own Tribe fairer, or as fair,  
At least of thy own Nation, and as noble.

Sam: The first I saw at Timna, and she pleas'd  
Mee, not my Parents, that I sought to wed, 220  
The daughter of an Infidel: they knew not  
That what I motion'd was of God; I knew  
From intimate impulse, and therefore urg'd  
The Marriage on; that by occasion hence  
I might begin Israel's Deliverance,  
The work to which I was divinely call'd;  
She proving false, the next I took to Wife  
(O that I never had! fond wish too late)  
Was in the Vale of Sorec, Dalila,  
That specious Monster, my accomlisht snare. 230  
I thought it lawful from my former act,  
And the same end; still watching to oppress

Israel's oppressours: of what now I suffer  
She was not the prime cause, but I my self,  
Who vanquisht with a peal of words (O weakness!)  
Gave up my fort of silence to a Wo Man.

Chor: In seeking just occasion to provoke  
The Philistine, thy Countries Enemy,  
Thou never wast remiss, I hear thee witness:  
Yet Israel still serves with all his Sons. 240

Sam: That fault I take not on me, but transfer  
On Israel's Governours, and Heads of Tribes,  
Who seeing those great acts which God had done  
Singly by me against their Conquerours  
Acknowledg'd not, or not at all consider'd  
Deliverance offerd: I on th' other side  
Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds,  
The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the doer;  
But they persisted deaf, and would not seem  
To count them things worth notice, till at length 250  
Thir Lords the Philistines with gather'd powers  
Enterd Judea seeking mee, who then  
Safe to the rock of Etham was retir'd,  
Not flying, but fore-casting in what place  
To set upon them, what advantag'd best;  
Mean while the men of Judah to prevent  
The harrass of thir Land, beset me round;  
I willingly on some conditions came  
Into thir hands, and they as gladly yield me  
To the uncircumcis'd a welcom prey, 260  
Bound with two cords; but cords to me were threds  
Tought with the flame: on thir whole Host I flew  
Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd  
Thir choicest youth; they only liv'd who fled.  
Had Judah that day join'd, or one whole Tribe,

They had by this possess'd the Towers of Gath,  
And lorded over them whom now they serve;  
But what more oft in Nations grown corrupt,  
And by thir vices brought to servitude,  
Then to love Bondage more then Liberty, 270  
Bondage with ease then strenuous liberty;  
And to despise, or envy, or suspect  
Whom God hath of his special favour rais'd  
As thir Deliverer; if he aught begin,  
How frequent to desert him, and at last  
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds?

Chor: Thy words to my remembrance bring  
How Succoth and the Fort of Penuel  
Thir great Deliverer contemn'd,  
The matchless Gideon in pursuit 280  
Of Madian and her vanquisht Kings;  
And how ingrateful Ephraim  
Not worse then by his shield and spear  
Had dealt with Jephtha, who by argument,  
Defended Israel from the Ammonite,  
Had not his prowess quell'd thir pride  
In that sore battel when so many dy'd  
Without Reprieve adjudg'd to death,  
For want of well pronouncing Shibboleth.

Sam: Of such examples adde mee to the roul, 290  
Mee easily indeed mine may neglect,  
But Gods propos'd deliverance not so.

Chor: Just are the ways of God,  
And justifiable to Men;  
Unless there be who think not God at all,  
If any be, they walk obscure;  
For of such Doctrine never was there School,



But the heart of the Fool,  
 And no man therein Doctor but himself.  
 Yet more there be who doubt his ways not just, 300  
 As to his own edicts, found contradicting,  
 Then give the rains to wandering thought,  
 Regardless of his glories diminution;  
 Till by thir own perplexities involv'd  
 They ravel more, still less resolv'd,  
 But never find self-satisfying solution.  
 As if they would confine th' interminable,  
 And tie him to his own prescript,  
 Who made our Laws to bind us, not himself,  
 And hath full right to exempt 310  
 Whom so it pleases him by choice  
 From National obstruction, without taint  
 Of sin, or legal debt;  
 For with his own Laws he can best dispence.  
 He would not else who never wanted means,  
 Nor in respect of the enemy just cause  
 To set his people free,  
 Have prompted this Heroic Nazarite,  
 Against his vow of strictest purity,  
 To seek in marriage that fallacious Bride, 320  
 Unclean, unchaste.  
 Down Reason then, at least vain reasonings down,  
 Though Reason here aver  
 That moral verdict quits her of unclean:  
 Unchaste was subsequent, her stain not his.  
 But see here comes thy reverend Sire  
 With careful step, Locks white as doune,  
 Old Manoah: advise  
 Forthwith how thou oughtst to receive him.

Sam: Ay me, another inward grief awak't, 330  
 With mention of that name renews th' assault.

Man: Brethren and men of Dan, for such ye seem,  
Though in this uncouth place; if old respect,  
As I suppose, towards your once gloried friend,  
My Son now Captive, hither hath inform'd  
Your younger feet, while mine cast back with age  
Came lagging after; say if he be here.

Chor: As signal now in low dejected state,  
As earst in highest; behold him where he lies.

Man: O miserable change! is this the man, 340  
That invincible Samson, far renown'd,  
The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength  
Equivalent to Angels walk'd thir streets,  
None offering fight; who single combatant  
Duell'd thir Armies rank't in proud array,  
Himself an Army, now unequal match  
To save himself against a coward arm'd  
At one spears length. O ever failing trust  
In mortal strength! and oh what not in man  
Deceivable and vain! Nay what thing good 350  
Pray'd for, but often proves our woe, our bane?  
I pray'd for Children, and thought barrenness  
In wedlock a reproach; I gain'd a Son,  
And such a Son as all Men hail'd me happy;  
Who would be now a Father in my stead?  
O wherefore did God grant me my request,  
And as a blessing with such pomp adorn'd?  
Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt  
Our earnest Prayers, then giv'n with solemn hand  
As Graces, draw a Scorpions tail behind? 360  
For this did the Angel twice descend? for this  
Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a Plant;  
Select, and Sacred, Glorious for a while,

The miracle of men: then in an hour  
Ensna'r'd, assaulted, overcome, led bound,  
Thy Foes derision, Captive, Poor, and Blind  
Into a Dungeon thrust, to work with Slaves?  
Alas methinks whom God hath chosen once  
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,  
He should not so o'rewhelm, and as a thrall 370  
Subject him to so foul indignities,  
Be it but for honours sake of former deeds.

Sam: Appoint not heavenly disposition, Father,  
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me  
But justly; I my self have brought them on,  
Sole Author I, sole cause: if aught seem vile,  
As vile hath been my folly, who have profan'd  
The mystery of God giv'n me under pledge  
Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,  
A Canaanite, my faithless enemy. 380  
This well I knew, nor was at all surpris'd,  
But warn'd by oft experience: did not she  
Of Timna first betray me, and reveal  
The secret wrested from me in her highth  
Of Nuptial Love profest, carrying it strait  
To them who had corrupted her, my Spies,  
And Rivals? In this other was there found  
More Faith? who also in her prime of love,  
Spousal embraces, vitiated with Gold,  
Though offer'd only, by the sent conceiv'd 390  
Her spurious first-born; Treason against me?  
Thrice she assay'd with flattering prayers and sighs,  
And amorous reproaches to win from me  
My capital secret, in what part my strength  
Lay stor'd in what part summ'd, that she might know:  
Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport  
Her importunity, each time perceiving



How openly, and with what impudence  
She purpos'd to betray me, and (which was worse  
Then undissembl'd hate) with what contempt 400  
She sought to make me Traytor to my self;  
Yet the fourth time, when mustring all her wiles,  
With blandisht parlies, feminine assaults,  
Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night  
To storm me over-watch't, and wearied out.  
At times when men seek most repose and rest,  
I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart,  
Who with a grain of manhood well resolv'd  
Might easily have shook off all her snares:  
But foul effeminacy held me yok't 410  
Her Bond-slave; O indignity, O blot  
To Honour and Religion! servil mind  
Rewarded well with servil punishment!  
The base degree to which I now am fall'n,  
These rags, this grinding, is not yet so base  
As was my former servitude, ignoble,  
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,  
True slavery, and that blindness worse then this,  
That saw not how degeneratly I serv'd.

Man: I cannot praise thy Marriage choises, Son, 420  
Rather approv'd them not; but thou didst plead  
Divine impulsion prompting how thou might'st  
Find some occasion to infest our Foes.  
I state not that; this I am sure; our Foes  
Found soon occasion thereby to make thee  
Thir Captive, and thir triumph; thou the sooner  
Temptation found'st, or over-potent charms  
To violate the sacred trust of silence  
Deposited within thee; which to have kept  
Tacit, was in thy power; true; and thou hear'st 430  
Enough, and more the burden of that fault;

Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying  
That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains,  
This day the Philistines a popular Feast  
Here celebrate in Gaza, and proclaim  
Great Pomp, and Sacrifice, and Praises loud  
To Dagon, as their God who hath deliver'd  
Thee Samson bound and blind into thir hands,  
Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a slain.  
So Dagon shall be magnifi'd, and God, 440  
Besides whom is no God, compar'd with Idols,  
Disglorifi'd, blasphem'd, and had in scorn  
By th' Idolatrous rout amidst thir wine;  
Which to have come to pass by means of thee,  
Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest,  
Of all reproach the most with shame that ever  
Could have befall'n thee and thy Fathers house.

Sam: Father, I do acknowledge and confess  
That I this honour, I this pomp have brought  
To Dagon, and advanc'd his praises high 450  
Among the Heathen round; to God have brought  
Dishonour, obloquie, and op't the mouths  
Of Idolists, and Atheists; have brought scandal  
To Israel diffidence of God, and doubt  
In feeble hearts, propense anough before  
To waver, or fall off and joyn with Idols:  
Which is my chief affliction, shame and sorrow,  
The anguish of my Soul, that suffers not  
Mine eie to harbour sleep, or thoughts to rest.  
This only hope relieves me, that the strife 460  
With me hath end; all the contest is now  
'Twixt God and Dagon; Dagon hath presum'd,  
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,  
His Deity comparing and preferring  
Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure,

Will not connive, or linger, thus provok'd,  
But will arise and his great name assert:  
Dagon must stoop, and shall e're long receive  
Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him  
Of all these boasted Trophies won on me, 470  
And with confusion blank his Worshippers.

Man: With cause this hope relieves thee, and these words  
I as a Prophecy receive: for God,  
Nothing more certain, will not long defer  
To vindicate the glory of his name  
Against all competition, nor will long  
Endure it, doubtful whether God be Lord,  
Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be done?  
Thou must not in the mean while here forgot  
Lie in this miserable loathsom plight 480  
Neglected. I already have made way  
To some Philistian Lords, with whom to treat  
About thy ransom: well they may by this  
Have satisfi'd thir utmost of revenge  
By pains and slaveries, worse then death inflicted  
On thee, who now no more canst do them harm.

Sam: Spare that proposal, Father, spare the trouble  
Of that sollicitation; let me here,  
As I deserve, pay on my punishment;  
And expiate, if possible, my crime, 490  
Shameful garrulity. To have reveal'd  
Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,  
How hainous had the fact been, how deserving  
Contempt, and scorn of all, to be excluded  
All friendship, and avoided as a blab,  
The mark of fool set on his front?  
But I Gods counsel have not kept, his holy secret  
Presumptuously have publish'd, impiously,



Weakly at least, and shamefully: A sin  
That Gentiles in thir Parables condemn 500  
To thir abyss and horrid pains confin'd.

Man: Be penitent and for thy fault contrite,  
But act not in thy own affliction, Son,  
Repent the sin, but if the punishment  
Thou canst avoid, selfpreservation bids;  
Or th' execution leave to high disposal,  
And let another hand, not thine, exact  
Thy penal forfeit from thy self; perhaps  
God will relent, and quit thee all his debt;  
Who evermore approves and more accepts 510  
(Best pleas'd with humble and filial submission)  
Him who imploring mercy sues for life,  
Then who selfrigorous chooses death as due;  
Which argues overjust, and self-displeas'd  
For self-offence, more then for God offended.  
Reject not then what offerd means, who knows  
But God hath set before us, to return thee  
Home to thy countrey and his sacred house,  
Where thou mayst bring thy off'rings, to avert  
His further ire, with praiers and vows renew'd. 520

Sam: His pardon I implore; but as for life,  
To what end should I seek it? when in strength  
All mortals I excell'd, and great in hopes  
With youthful courage and magnanimous thoughts  
Of birth from Heav'n foretold and high exploits,  
Full of divine instinct, after some proof  
Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond  
The Sons of Anac, famous now and blaz'd,  
Fearless of danger, like a petty God  
I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded 530  
On hostile ground, none daring my affront.

Then swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell  
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,  
Softn'd with pleasure and voluptuous life;  
At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge  
Of all my strength in the lascivious lap  
Of a deceitful Concubine who shore me  
Like a tame Weather, all my precious fleece,  
Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,  
Shav'n, and disarm'd among my enemies. 540

Chor: Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,  
Which many a famous Warriour overturns,  
Thou couldst repress, nor did the dancing Rubie  
Sparkling; out-pow'rd, the flavor, or the smell,  
Or taste that cheers the heart of Gods and men,  
Allure thee from the cool Crystalline stream.

Sam: Where ever fountain or fresh current flow'd  
Against the Eastern ray, translucent, pure,  
With touch aetherial of Heav'ns fiery rod  
I drank, from the clear milkie juice allaying 550  
Thirst, and refresht; nor envy'd them the grape  
Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with fumes.

Chor: O madness, to think use of strongest wines  
And strongest drinks our chief support of health,  
When God with these forbid'n made choice to rear  
His mighty Champion, strong above compare,  
Whose drink was only from the liquid brook.

Sam: But what avail'd this temperance, not compleat  
Against another object more enticing?  
What boots it at one gate to make defence, 560  
And at another to let in the foe  
Effeminatly vanquish't? by which means,

Now blind, disheartn'd, sham'd, dishonour'd, quell'd,  
To what can I be useful, wherein serve  
My Nation, and the work from Heav'n impos'd,  
But to sit idle on the houshold hearth,  
A burdenous drone; to visitants a gaze,  
Or pitied object, these redundant locks  
Robustious to no purpose clustring down,  
Vain monument of strength; till length of years 570  
And sedentary numness craze my limbs  
To a contemptible old age obscure.  
Here rather let me drudge and earn my bread,  
Till vermin or the draff of servil food  
Consume me, and oft-invocated death  
Hast'n the welcom end of all my pains.

Man: Wilt thou then serve the Philistines with that gift  
Which was expresly giv'n thee to annoy them?  
Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,  
Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age out-worn. 580  
But God who caus'd a fountain at thy prayer  
From the dry ground to spring, thy thirst to allay  
After the brunt of battel, can as easie  
Cause light again within thy eies to spring,  
Wherewith to serve him better then thou hast;  
And I perswade me so; why else this strength  
Miraculous yet remaining in those locks?  
His might continues in thee not for naught,  
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus.

Sam: All otherwise to me my thoughts portend, 590  
That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,  
Nor th' other light of life continue long,  
But yield to double darkness nigh at hand:  
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,  
My hopes all flat, nature within me seems

In all her functions weary of herself;  
My race of glory run, and race of shame,  
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.

Man: Believe not these suggestions which proceed  
From anguish of the mind and humours black, 600  
That mingle with thy fancy. I however  
Must not omit a Fathers timely care  
To prosecute the means of thy deliverance  
By ransom or how else: mean while be calm,  
And healing words from these thy friends admit.

Sam: O that torment should not be confin'd  
To the bodies wounds and sores  
With maladies innumerable  
In heart, head, brest, and reins;  
But must secret passage find 610  
To th' inmost mind,  
There exercise all his fierce accidents,  
And on her purest spirits prey,  
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,  
With answerable pains, but more intense,  
'Though void of corporal sense.  
My griefs not only pain me  
As a lingring disease,  
But finding no redress, ferment and rage,  
Nor less then wounds immedicable 620  
Ranckle, and fester, and gangrene,  
To black mortification.  
Thoughts my Tormenters arm'd with deadly stings  
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,  
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise  
Dire inflammation which no cooling herb  
Or medcinal liquor can assuage,  
Nor breath of Vernal Air from snowy Alp.



Sleep hath forsook and giv'n me o're  
To deaths benumbing Opium as my only cure. 630  
Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,  
And sense of Heav'ns desertion.  
I was his nursling once and choice delight,  
His destin'd from the womb,  
Promisd by Heavenly message twice descending.  
Under his special eie  
Abstemious I grew up and thriv'd amain;  
He led me on to mightiest deeds  
Above the nerve of mortal arm  
Against the uncircumcis'd, our enemies. 640  
But now hath cast me off as never known,  
And to those cruel enemies,  
Whom I by his appointment had provok't,  
Left me all helpless with th' irreparable loss  
Of sight, reserv'd alive to be repeated  
The subject of thir cruelty, or scorn.  
Nor am I in the list of them that hope;  
Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless;  
This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,  
No long petition, speedy death, 650  
The close of all my miseries, and the balm.

Chor: Many are the sayings of the wise  
In antient and in modern books enroll'd;  
Extolling Patience as the truest fortitude;  
And to the bearing well of all calamities,  
All chances incident to mans frail life  
Consolatories writ  
With studied argument, and much perswasion sought  
Lenient of grief and anxious thought,  
But with th' afflicted in his pangs thir sound 680  
Little prevails, or rather seems a tune,  
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint,

Unless he feel within  
 Some source of consolation from above;  
 Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,  
 And fainting spirits uphold.  
 God of our Fathers, what is man!  
 That thou towards him with hand so various,  
 Or might I say contrarious,  
 Temperst thy providence through his short course, 670  
 Not evenly, as thou rul'st  
 The Angelic orders and inferiour creatures mute,  
 Irrational and brute.  
 Nor do I name of men the common rout,  
 That wandring loose about  
 Grow up and perish, as the summer flie,  
 Heads without name no more rememberd,  
 But such as thou hast solemnly elected,  
 With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd  
 To some great work, thy glory, 680  
 And peoples safety, which in part they effect:  
 Yet toward these thus dignifi'd, thou oft  
 Amidst thir highth of noon,  
 Changest thy countenance, and thy hand with no regard  
 Of highest favours past  
 From thee on them, or them to thee of service.  
 Nor only dost degrade them, or remit  
 To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismissal,  
 But throw'st them lower then thou didst exalt them high,  
 Unseemly falls in human eie, 690  
 Too grievous for the trespass or omission,  
 Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword  
 Of Heathen and prophane, thir carkasses  
 To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd:  
 Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,  
 And condemnation of the ingrateful multitude.  
 If these they scape, perhaps in poverty

With sickness and disease thou bow'st them down,  
 Painful diseases and deform'd, 700  
 In crude old age;  
 Though not disordinate, yet causless suffring  
 The punishment of dissolute days, in fine,  
 Just or unjust, alike seem miserable,  
 For oft alike, both come to evil end.  
 So deal not with this once thy glorious Champion,  
 The Image of thy strength, and mighty minister.  
 What do I beg? how hast thou dealt already?  
 Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn  
 His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.  
 But who is this, what thing of Sea or Land? 710  
 Femal of sex it seems,  
 That so bedeckt, ornate, and gay,  
 Comes this way sailing  
 Like a stately Ship  
 Of Tarsus, bound for th' Isles  
 Of Javan or Gadier  
 With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,  
 Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,  
 Courted by all the winds that hold them play,  
 An Amber sent of odorous perfume 720  
 Her harbinger, a damsel train behind;  
 Some rich Philistian Matron she may seem,  
 And now at nearer view, no other certain  
 Than Dalila thy wife.

Sam: My Wife, my Traytress, let her not come near me.

Cho: Yet on she moves, now stands & eies thee fixt,  
 About t'have spoke, but now, with head declin'd  
 Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew, she weeps  
 And words addrest seem into tears dissolv'd,  
 Wetting the borders of her silk'n veil: 730

But now again she makes address to speak.

Dal: With doubtful feet and wavering resolution  
I came, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson,  
Which to have merited, without excuse,  
I cannot but acknowledge; yet if tears  
May expiate (though the fact more evil drew  
In the perverse event then I foresaw)  
My penance hath not slack'n'd, though my pardon  
No way assur'd. But conjugal affection  
Prevailing over fear, and timorous doubt 740  
Hath led me on desirous to behold  
Once more thy face, and know of thy estate.  
If aught in my ability may serve  
To light'n what thou suffer'st, and appease  
Thy mind with what amends is in my power,  
Though late, yet in some part to recompense  
My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.

Sam: Out, out Hyaena; these are thy wonted arts,  
And arts of every woman false like thee,  
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray, 750  
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,  
And reconciliation move with feign'd remorse,  
Confess, and promise wonders in her change,  
Not truly penitent, but chief to try  
Her husband, how far urg'd his patience bears,  
His virtue or weakness which way to assail:  
Then with more cautious and instructed skill  
Again transgresses, and again submits;  
That wisest and best men full oft beguil'd  
With goodness principl'd not to reject 760  
The penitent, but ever to forgive,  
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,  
Entangl'd with a poisonous bosom snake,



If not by quick destruction soon cut off  
As I by thee, to Ages an example.

Dal: Yet hear me Samson; not that I endeavour  
To lessen or extenuate my offence,  
But that on th' other side if it be weigh'd  
By it self, with aggravations not surcharg'd,  
Or else with just allowance counterpois'd 770  
I may, if possible, thy pardon find  
The easier towards me, or thy hatred less.  
First granting, as I do, it was a weakness  
In me, but incident to all our sex,  
Curiosity, inquisitive, importune  
Of secrets, then with like infirmity  
To publish them, both common female faults:  
Was it not weakness also to make known  
For importunity, that is for naught,  
Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety? 780  
To what I did thou shewdst me first the way.  
But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not.  
Nor shouldst thou have trusted that to womans frailty  
E're I to thee, thou to thy self wast cruel.  
Let weakness then with weakness come to parl  
So near related, or the same of kind,  
Thine forgive mine; that men may censure thine  
The gentler, if severely thou exact not  
More strength from me, then in thy self was found.  
And what if Love, which thou interpret'st hate, 790  
The jealousy of Love, powerful of sway  
In human hearts, nor less in mine towards thee,  
Caus'd what I did? I saw thee mutable  
Of fancy, feard lest one day thou wouldst leave me  
As her at Timna, sought by all means therefore  
How to endear, and hold thee to me firmest:  
No better way I saw then by importuning

To learn thy secrets, get into my power  
 Thy key of strength and safety: thou wilt say,  
 Why then reveal'd? I was assur'd by those 800  
 Who tempted me, that nothing was design'd  
 Against thee but safe custody, and hold:  
 That made for me, I knew that liberty  
 Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,  
 While I at home sate full of cares and fears  
 Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed;  
 Here I should still enjoy thee day and night  
 Mine and Loves prisoner, not the Philistines,  
 Whole to my self, unhazarded abroad,  
 Fearless at home of partners in my love. 810  
 These reasons in Loves law have past for good,  
 Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps:  
 And Love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much wo,  
 Yet always pity or pardon hath obtain'd.  
 Be not unlike all others, not austere  
 As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.  
 If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,  
 In uncompassionate anger do not so.

Sam: How cunningly the sorceress displays  
 Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine! 820  
 That malice not repentance brought thee hither,  
 By this appears: I gave, thou say'st, th' example,  
 I led the way; bitter reproach, but true,  
 I to my self was false e're thou to me,  
 Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,  
 Take to thy wicked deed: which when thou seest  
 Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,  
 Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather  
 Confess it feign'd, weakness is thy excuse,  
 And I believe it, weakness to resist 830  
 Philistian gold: if weakness may excuse,

What Murtherer, what Traytor, Parricide,  
Incestuous, Sacrilegious, but may plead it?  
All wickedness is weakness: that plea therefore  
With God or Man will gain thee no remission.  
But Love constrain'd thee; call it furious rage  
To satisfie thy lust: Love seeks to have Love;  
My love how couldst thou hope, who tookst the way  
To raise in me inexpiable hate,  
Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd? 840  
In vain thou striv'st to cover shame with shame,  
Or by evasions thy crime uncoverst more.

Dal: Since thou determinst weakness for no plea  
In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,  
Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,  
What sieges girt me round, e're I consented;  
Which might have aw'd the best resolv'd of men,  
The constantest to have yielded without blame.  
It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,  
That wrought with me: thou know'st the Magistrates 850  
And Princes of my countrey came in person,  
Sollicited, commanded, threatn'd, urg'd,  
Adjur'd by all the bonds of civil Duty  
And of Religion, press'd how just it was,  
How honourable, how glorious to entrap  
A common enemy, who had destroy'd  
Such numbers of our Nation: and the Priest  
Was not behind, but ever at my ear,  
Preaching how meritorious with the gods  
It would be to ensnare an irreligious 860  
Dishonourer of Dagon: what had I  
To oppose against such powerful arguments?  
Only my love of thee held long debate;  
And combated in silence all these reasons  
With hard contest: at length that grounded maxim

So rife and celebrated in the mouths  
Of wisest men; that to the public good  
Private respects must yield; with grave authority'  
Took full possession of me and prevail'd;  
Vertue, as I thought, truth, duty so enjoying. 870

Sam: I thought where all thy circling wiles would end;  
In feign'd Religion, smooth hypocrisie.  
But had thy love, still odiously pretended,  
Bin, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught thee  
Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds.  
I before all the daughters of my Tribe  
And of my Nation chose thee from among  
My enemies, lov'd thee, as too well thou knew'st,  
Too well, unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,  
Not out of levity, but over-powr'd 880  
By thy request, who could deny thee nothing;  
Yet now am judg'd an enemy. Why then  
Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband?  
Then, as since then, thy countries foe profest:  
Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave  
Parents and countrey; nor was I their subject,  
Nor under their protection but my own,  
Thou mine, not theirs: if aught against my life  
Thy countrey sought of thee, it sought unjustly,  
Against the law of nature, law of nations, 890  
No more thy countrey, but an impious crew  
Of men conspiring to uphold thir state  
By worse than hostile deeds, violating the ends  
For which our countrey is a name so dear;  
Not therefore to be obey'd. But zeal mov'd thee;  
To please thy gods thou didst it; gods unable  
To acquit themselves and prosecute their foes  
But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction  
Of their own deity, Gods cannot be:



Less therefore to be pleas'd, obey'd, or fear'd, 900  
These false pretexts and varnish'd colours failing,  
Bare in thy guilt how foul must thou appear?

Dal: In argument with men a woman ever  
Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.

Sam: For want of words no doubt, or lack of breath,  
Witness when I was worried with thy peals.

Dal: I was a fool, too rash, and quite mistaken  
In what I thought would have succeeded best.  
Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson,  
Afford me place to shew what recompence 910  
Towards thee I intend for what I have misdone,  
Misguided: only what remains past cure  
Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist  
To afflict thy self in vain: though sight be lost,  
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd  
Where other senses want not their delights  
At home in leisure and domestic ease,  
Exempt from many a care and chance to which  
Eye-sight exposes daily men abroad.  
I to the Lords will intercede, not doubting 920  
Thir favourable ear, that I may fetch thee  
From forth this loathsom prison-house, to abide  
With me, where my redoubl'd love and care  
With nursing diligence, to me glad office,  
May ever tend about thee to old age  
With all things grateful chear'd, and so suppli'd,  
That what by me thou hast lost thou least shalt miss.

Sam: No, no, of my condition take no care;  
It fits not; thou and I long since are twain;  
Nor think me so unwary or accurst 930

To bring my feet again into the snare  
Where once I have been caught; I know thy trains  
Though dearly to my cost, thy ginns, and toyls;  
Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms  
No more on me have power, their force is null'd,  
So much of Adders wisdom I have learn't  
To fence my ear against thy sorceries.  
If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men  
Lov'd, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone could hate me  
Thy Husband, slight me, sell me, and forgo me; 940  
How wouldst thou use me now, blind, and thereby  
Deceiveable, in most things as a child  
Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and scorn'd,  
And last neglected? How wouldst thou insult  
When I must live uxorious to thy will  
In perfet thraldom, how again betray me,  
Bearing my words and doings to the Lords  
To gloss upon, and censuring, frown or smile?  
This Gaol I count the house of Liberty  
To thine whose doors my feet shall never enter. 950

Dal: Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand.

Sam: Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake  
My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.  
At distance I forgive thee, go with that;  
Bewail thy falshood, and the pious works  
It hath brought forth to make thee memorable  
Among illustrious women, faithful wives:  
Cherish thy hast'n'd widowhood with the gold  
Of Matrimonial treason: so farewell.

Dal: I see thou art implacable, more deaf 960  
To prayers, then winds and seas, yet winds to seas  
Are reconcil'd at length, and Sea to Shore:

Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,  
 Eternal tempest never to be calm'd.  
 Why do I humble thus my self, and suing  
 For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate?  
 Bid go with evil omen and the brand  
 Of infamy upon my name denounc't?  
 To mix with thy concernments I desist  
 Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own. 970  
 Fame if not double-fac't is double-mouth'd,  
 And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds,  
 On both his wings, one black, th' other white,  
 Bears greatest names in his wild aerie flight.  
 My name perhaps among the Circumcis'd  
 In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering Tribes,  
 To all posterity may stand defam'd,  
 With malediction mention'd, and the blot  
 Of falshood most unconjugal traduc't.  
 But in my countrey where I most desire, 980  
 In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath  
 I shall be nam'd among the famousest  
 Of Women, sung at solemn festivals,  
 Living and dead recorded, who to save  
 Her countrey from a fierce destroyer, chose  
 Above the faith of wedlock-bands, my tomb  
 With odours visited and annual flowers.  
 Not less renown'd then in Mount Ephraim,  
 Jael who with inhospitable guile  
 Smote Sisera sleeping through the Temples nail'd. 990  
 Nor shall I count it hainous to enjoy  
 The public marks of honour and reward  
 Conferr'd upon me, for the piety  
 Which to my countrey I was judg'd to have shewn.  
 At this who ever envies or repines  
 I leave him to his lot, and like my own.

Chor: She's gone, a manifest Serpent by her sting  
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

Sam: So let her go, God sent her to debase me,  
And aggravate my folly who committed 1000  
To such a viper his most sacred trust  
Of secresie, my safety, and my life.

Chor: Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,  
After offence returning, to regain  
Love once possest, nor can be easily  
Repuls't, without much inward passion felt  
And secret sting of amorous remorse.

Sam: Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord end,  
Not wedlock-treachery endangering life.

Chor: It is not vertue, wisdom, valour, wit, 1010  
Strength, comliness of shape, or amplest merit  
That womans love can win or long inherit;  
But what it is, hard is to say,  
Harder to hit,  
(Which way soever men refer it)  
Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day  
Or seven, though one should musing sit;  
If any of these or all, the Timnian bride  
Had not so soon preferr'd  
Thy Paranymp, worthless to thee compar'd, 1020  
Successour in thy bed,  
Nor both so loosly disally'd  
Thir nuptials, nor this last so trecherously  
Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.  
Is it for that such outward ornament  
Was lavish't on thir Sex, that inward gifts  
Were left for hast unfinish't, judgment scant,



Capacity not rais'd to apprehend  
 Or value what is best  
 In choice, but ofttest to affect the wrong? 1030  
 Or was too much of self-love mixt,  
 Of constancy no root infixt,  
 That either they love nothing, or not long?  
 What e're it be, to wisest men and best  
 Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil,  
 Soft, modest, meek, demure,  
 Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a thorn  
 Intestin, far within defensive arms  
 A cleaving mischief, in his way to vertue  
 Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms 1040  
 Draws him awry enslav'd  
 With dotage, and his sense depriv'd  
 To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.  
 What Pilot so expert but needs must wreck  
 Embarqu'd with such a Stears-mate at the Helm?  
 Favour'd of Heav'n who finds  
 One vertuous rarely found,  
 That in domestic good combines:  
 Happy that house! his way to peace is smooth:  
 But vertue which breaks through all opposition, 1050  
 And all temptation can remove,  
 Most shines and most is acceptable above.  
 Therefore Gods universal Law  
 Gave to the man despotic power  
 Over his female in due awe,  
 Nor from that right to part an hour,  
 Smile she or lowre:  
 So shall he least confusion draw  
 On his whole life, not sway'd  
 By female usurpation, nor dismay'd. 1060  
 But had we best retire, I see a storm?

Sam: Fair days have oft contracted wind and rain.

Chor: But this another kind of tempest brings.

Sam: Be less abstruse, my riddling days are past.

Chor: Look now for no enchanting voice, nor fear  
The bait of honied words; a rougher tongue  
Draws hitherward, I know him by his stride,  
The Giant Harapha of Gath, his look  
Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.  
Comes he in peace? what wind hath blown him hither 1070  
I less conjecture then when first I saw  
The sumptuous Dalila floating this way:  
His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.

Sam: Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.

Chor: His fraught we soon shall know, he now arrives.

Har: I come not Samson, to condole thy chance,  
As these perhaps, yet wish it had not been,  
Though for no friendly intent. I am of Gath,  
Men call me Harapha, of stock renown'd  
As Og or Anak and the Emims old 1080  
That Kiriathaim held, thou knowst me now  
If thou at all art known. Much I have heard  
Of thy prodigious might and feats perform'd  
Incredible to me, in this displeas'd,  
That I was never present on the place  
Of those encounters, where we might have tri'd  
Each others force in camp or listed field:  
And now am come to see of whom such noise  
Hath walk'd about, and each limb to survey,  
If thy appearance answer loud report. 1090

Sam: The way to know were not to see but taste.

Har: Dost thou already single me; I thought  
Gives and the Mill had tam'd thee? O that fortune  
Had brought me to the field where thou art fam'd  
To have wrought such wonders with an Asses Jaw;  
I should have forc'd thee soon with other arms,  
Or left thy carkass where the Ass lay thrown:  
So had the glory of Prowess been recover'd  
To Palestine, won by a Philistine  
From the unforeskinn'd race, of whom thou hear'st 1100  
The highest name for valiant Acts, that honour  
Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee,  
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.

Sam: Boast not of what thou wouldst have done, but do  
What then thou would'st, thou seest it in thy hand.

Har: To combat with a blind man I disdain  
And thou hast need much washing to be toucht.

Sam: Such usage as your honourable Lords  
Afford me assassinated and betray'd,  
Who durst not with thir whole united powers 1110  
In fight withstand me single and unarm'd,  
Nor in the house with chamber Ambushes  
Close-banded durst attaque me, no not sleeping,  
Till they had hir'd a woman with their gold  
Breaking her Marriage Faith to circumvent me.  
Therefore without feign'd shifts let be assign'd  
Some narrow place enclos'd, where sight may give thee.  
Or rather flight, no great advantage on me;  
Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy Helmet  
And Brigandine of brass, thy broad Habergeon. 1120

Vant-brass and Greves, and Gauntlet, add thy Spear  
A Weavers beam, and seven-times-folded shield.

I only with an Oak'n staff will meet thee,  
And raise such out-cries on thy clatter'd Iron,  
Which long shall not with-hold mee from thy head,  
That in a little time while breath remains thee,  
Thou oft shalt wish thy self at Gath to boast  
Again in safety what thou wouldst have done  
To Samson, but shalt never see Gath more.

Har: Thou durst not thus disparage glorious arms 1130  
Which greatest Heroes have in battel worn,  
Thir ornament and safety, had not spells  
And black enchantments, some Magicians Art  
Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong, which thou from Heaven  
Feign'dst at thy birth was giv'n thee in thy hair,  
Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs  
Were bristles rang'd like those that ridge the back  
Of chaf't wild Boars, or ruffl'd Porcupines.

Sam: I know no Spells, use no forbidden Arts;  
My trust is in the living God who gave me 1140  
At my Nativity this strength, diffus'd  
No less through all my sinews, joints and bones,  
Then thine, while I preserv'd these locks unshorn,  
The pledge of my unviolated vow.  
For proof hereof, if Dagon be thy god,  
Go to his Temple, invoke his aid  
With solemnest devotion, spread before him  
How highly it concerns his glory now  
To frustrate and dissolve these Magic spells,  
Which I to be the power of Israel's God 1150  
Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,  
Offering to combat thee his Champion bold,  
With th' utmost of his Godhead seconded:



Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy sorrow  
Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mine.

Har: Presume not on thy God, what e're he be,  
Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off  
Quite from his people, and delivered up  
Into thy Enemies hand, permitted them  
To put out both thine eyes, and fetter'd send thee 1160  
Into the common Prison, there to grind  
Among the Slaves and Asses thy comrades,  
As good for nothing else, no better service  
With those, thy boyst'rous locks, no worthy match  
For valour to assail, nor by the sword  
Of noble Warriour, so to stain his honour,  
But by the Barbers razor best subdu'd.

Sam: All these indignities, for such they are  
From thine, these evils I deserve and more,  
Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me 1170  
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon  
Whose ear is ever open; and his eye  
Gracious to re-admit the suppliant;  
In confidence whereof I once again  
Defie thee to the trial of mortal fight,  
By combat to decide whose god is God,  
Thine or whom I with Israel's Sons adore.

Har: Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in trusting  
He will accept thee to defend his cause,  
A Murtherer, a Revolter, and a Robber. 1180

Sam: Tongue-doubtie Giant, how dost thou prove me these?

Har: Is not thy Nation subject to our Lords?  
Thir Magistrates confest it, when they took thee

As a League-breaker and deliver'd bound  
Into our hands: for hadst thou not committed  
Notorious murder on those thirty men  
At Askalon, who never did thee harm,  
Then like a Robber stripdst them of thir robes?  
The Philistines, when thou hadst broke the league,  
Went up with armed powers thee only seeking, 1190  
To others did no violence nor spoil.

Sam: Among the Daughters of the Philistines  
I chose a Wife, which argu'd me no foe;  
And in your City held my Nuptial Feast:  
But your ill-meaning Politician Lords,  
Under pretence of Bridal friends and guests,  
Appointed to await me thirty spies,  
Who threatning cruel death constrain'd the bride  
To wring from me and tell to them my secret,  
That solv'd the riddle which I had propos'd. 1200  
When I perceiv'd all set on enmity,  
As on my enemies, where ever chanc'd,  
I us'd hostility, and took thir spoil  
To pay my underminers in thir coin.  
My Nation was subjected to your Lords.  
It was the force of Conquest; force with force  
Is well ejected when the Conquer'd can.  
But I a private person, whom my Countrey  
As a league-breaker gave up bound, presum'd  
Single Rebellion and did Hostile Acts. 1210  
I was no private but a person rais'd  
With strength sufficient and command from Heav'n  
To free my Countrey; if their servile minds  
Me their Deliverer sent would not receive,  
But to thir Masters gave me up for nought,  
Th' unworthier they; whence to this day they serve.  
I was to do my part from Heav'n assign'd,

And had perform'd it if my known offence  
Had not disabl'd me, not all your force:  
These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant 1220  
Though by his blindness maim'd for high attempts,  
Who now defies thee thrice to single fight,  
As a petty enterprise of small enforce.

Har: With thee a Man condemn'd, a Slave enrol'd,  
Due by the Law to capital punishment?  
To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.

Sam: Cam'st thou for this, vain boaster, to survey me,  
To descant on my strength, and give thy verdict?  
Come nearer, part not hence so slight inform'd;  
But take good heed my hand survey not thee. 1230  
Har: O Baal-zebub! can my ears unus'd  
Hear these dishonours, and not render death?

Sam: No man with-holds thee, nothing from thy hand  
Fear I incurable; bring up thy van,  
My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free.

Har: This insolence other kind of answer fits.

Sam: Go baffl'd coward, lest I run upon thee,  
Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,  
And with one buffet lay thy structure low,  
Or swing thee in the Air, then dash thee down 1240  
To the hazard of thy brains and shatter'd sides.

Har: By Astaroth e're long thou shalt lament  
These braveries in Irons loaden on thee.

Chor: His Giantship is gone somewhat crestfall'n,  
Stalking with less unconsci'nable strides,

And lower looks, but in a sultrie chafe.

Sam: I dread him not, nor all his Giant-brood,  
Though Fame divulge him Father of five Sons  
All of Gigantic size, Goliah chief.

Chor: He will directly to the Lords, I fear, 1250  
And with malicious counsel stir them up  
Some way or other yet further to afflict thee.

Sam: He must allege some cause, and offer'd fight  
Will not dare mention, lest a question rise  
Whether he durst accept the offer or not,  
And that he durst not plain enough appear'd.  
Much more affliction then already felt  
They cannot well impose, nor I sustain;  
If they intend advantage of my labours  
The work of many hands, which earns my keeping 1260  
With no small profit daily to my owners.  
But come what will, my deadliest foe will prove  
My speediest friend, by death to rid me hence,  
The worst that he can give, to me the best.  
Yet so it may fall out, because thir end  
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine  
Draw thir own ruin who attempt the deed.

Chor: Oh how comely it is and how reviving  
To the Spirits of just men long oppress!  
When God into the hands of thir deliverer 1270  
Puts invincible might  
To quell the mighty of the Earth, th' oppressour,  
The brute and boist'rous force of violent men  
Hardy and industrious to support  
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue  
The righteous and all such as honour Truth;



He all thir Ammunition  
And feats of War defeats  
With plain Heroic magnitude of mind  
And celestial vigour arm'd, 1270  
Thir Armories and Magazins contemns,  
Renders them useless, while  
With winged expedition  
Swift as the lightning glance he executes  
His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd  
Lose thir defence distracted and amaz'd.  
But patience is more oft the exercise  
Of Saints, the trial of thir fortitude,  
Making them each his own Deliverer,  
And Victor over all 1290  
That tyrannie or fortune can inflict,  
Either of these is in thy lot,  
Samson, with might endu'd  
Above the Sons of men; but sight bereav'd  
May chance to number thee with those  
Whom Patience finally must crown.  
This Idols day hath bin to thee no day of rest,  
Labouring thy mind  
More then the working day thy hands,  
And yet perhaps more trouble is behind. 1300  
For I descry this way  
Some other tending, in his hand  
A Scepter or quaint staff he bears,  
Comes on amain, speed in his look.  
By his habit I discern him now  
A Public Officer, and now at hand.  
His message will be short and voluble.

Off: Ebrews, the Pris'ner Samson here I seek.

Chor: His manacles remark him, there he sits.

Off: Samson, to thee our Lords thus bid me say; 1310  
This day to Dagon is a solemn Feast,  
With Sacrifices, Triumph, Pomp, and Games;  
Thy strength they know surpassing human rate,  
And now some public proof thereof require  
To honour this great Feast, and great Assembly;  
Rise therefore with all speed and come along,  
Where I will see thee heartn'd and fresh clad  
To appear as fits before th' illustrious Lords.

Sam: Thou knowst I am an Ebrew, therefore tell them,  
Our Law forbids at thir Religious Rites 1320  
My presence; for that cause I cannot come.

Off: This answer, be assur'd, will not content them.

Sam: Have they not Sword-players, and ev'ry sort  
Of Gymnic Artists, Wrestlers, Riders, Runners,  
Juglers and Dancers, Antics, Mummers, Mimics,  
But they must pick me out with shackles tir'd,  
And over-labour'd at thir publick Mill,  
To make them sport with blind activity?  
Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels  
On my refusal to distress me more, 1330  
Or make a game of my calamities?  
Return the way thou cam'st, I will not come.

Off: Regard thy self, this will offend them highly.

Sam: My self? my conscience and internal peace.  
Can they think me so broken, so debas'd  
With corporal servitude, that my mind ever  
Will condescend to such absurd commands?  
Although thir drudge, to be thir fool or jester,

And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief  
To shew them feats, and play before thir god, 1340  
The worst of all indignities, yet on me  
Joyn'd with extream contempt? I will not come.

Off: My message was impos'd on me with speed,  
Brooks no delay: is this thy resolution?

Sam: So take it with what speed thy message needs.

Off: I am sorry what this stoutness will produce.

Sam: Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow indeed.

Chor: Consider, Samson; matters now are strain'd  
Up to the highth, whether to bold or break;  
He's gone, and who knows how he may report 1350  
Thy words by adding fuel to the flame?  
Expect another message more imperious,  
More Lordly thund'ring then thou well wilt bear.

Sam: Shall I abuse this Consecrated gift  
Of strength, again returning with my hair  
After my great transgression, so requite  
Favour renew'd, and add a greater sin  
By prostituting holy things to Idols;  
A Nazarite in place abominable  
Vaunting my strength in honour to thir Dagon? 1360  
Besides, how vile, contemptible, ridiculous,  
What act more execrably unclean, prophane?

Chor: Yet with this strength thou serv'st the Philistines,  
Idolatrous, uncircumcis'd, unclean.

Sam: Not in thir Idol-worship, but by labour

Honest and lawful to deserve my food  
Of those who have me in thir civil power.

Chor: Where the heart joins not, outward acts defile not

Sam: Where outward force constrains, the sentence holds:  
But who constrains me to the Temple of Dagon, 1370  
Not dragging? the Philistian Lords command.  
Commands are no constraints. If I obey them,  
I do it freely; venturing to displease  
God for the fear of Man, and Man prefer,  
Set God behind: which in his jealousy  
Shall never, unrepented, find forgiveness.  
Yet that he may dispense with me or thee  
Present in Temples at Idolatrous Rites  
For some important cause, thou needst not doubt.

Chor: How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach.  
1380

Sam: Be of good courage, I begin to feel  
Some rousing motions in me which dispose  
To something extraordinary my thoughts.  
I with this Messenger will go along,  
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour  
Our Law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.  
If there be aught of presage in the mind,  
This day will be remarkable in my life  
By some great act, or of my days the last.

Chor: In time thou hast resolv'd, the man returns. 1390

Off: Samson, this second message from our Lords  
To thee I am bid say. Art thou our Slave,  
Our Captive, at the public Mill our drudge,



And dar'st thou at our sending and command  
Dispute thy coming? come without delay;  
Or we shall find such Engines to assail  
And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of force,  
Though thou wert firmlier fastn'd then a rock.

Sam: I could be well content to try thir Art,  
Which to no few of them would prove pernicious. 1400  
Yet knowing thir advantages too many,  
Because they shall not trail me through thir streets  
Like a wild Beast, I am content to go.  
Masters commands come with a power resistless  
To such as owe them absolute subjection;  
And for a life who will not change his purpose?  
(So mutable are all the ways of men)  
Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply  
Scandalous or forbidden in our Law.

Off: I praise thy resolution, doff these links: 1410  
By this compliance thou wilt win the Lords  
To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

Sam: Brethren farewel, your company along  
I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them  
To see me girt with Friends; and how the sight  
Of me as of a common Enemy,  
So dreaded once, may now exasperate them  
I know not. Lords are Lordliest in thir wine,  
And the well-feasted Priest then soonest fir'd  
With zeal, if aught Religion seem concern'd: 1420  
No less the people on thir Holy-days  
Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable;  
Happ'n what may, of me expect to hear  
Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy  
Our God, our Law, my Nation, or my self,

The last of me or no I cannot warrant.

Chor: Go, and the Holy One

Of Israel be thy guide

To what may serve his glory best, & spread his name

Great among the Heathen round: 1430

Send thee the Angel of thy Birth, to stand

Fast by thy side, who from thy Fathers field

Rode up in flames after his message told

Of thy conception, and be now a shield

Of fire; that Spirit that first rusht on thee

In the camp of Dan

Be efficacious in thee now at need.

For never was from Heaven imparted

Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,

As in thy wond'rous actions Hath been seen. 1440

But wherefore comes old Manoa in such hast

With youthful steps? much livelier than e're while

He seems: supposing here to find his Son,

Or of him bringing to us some glad news?

Man: Peace with you brethren; my inducement hither

Was not at present here to find my Son,

By order of the Lords new parted hence

To come and play before them at thir Feast.

I heard all as I came, the City rings

And numbers thither flock, I had no will, 1450

Lest I should see him forc't to things unseemly.

But that which moved my coming now, was chiefly

To give ye part with me what hope I have

With good success to work his liberty.

Chor: That hope would much rejoyce us to partake

With thee; say reverend Sire, we thirst to hear.

Man: I have attempted one by one the Lords  
Either at home, or through the high street passing,  
With supplication prone and Fathers tears  
To accept of ransom for my Son thir pris'ner, 1460  
Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,  
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;  
That part most reverenc'd Dagon and his Priests,  
Others more moderate seeming, but thir aim  
Private reward, for which both God and State  
They easily would set to sale, a third  
More generous far and civil, who confess'd  
They had anough reveng'd, having reduc't  
Thir foe to misery beneath thir fears,  
The rest was magnanimity to remit, 1470  
If some convenient ransom were propos'd.  
What noise or shout was that? it tore the Skie.

Chor: Doubtless the people shouting to behold  
Thir once great dread, captive, & blind before them,  
Or at some proof of strength before them shown.

Man: His ransom, if my whole inheritance  
May compass it, shall willingly be paid  
And numberd down: much rather I shall chuse  
To live the poorest in my Tribe, then richest,  
And he in that calamitous prison left. 1480  
No, I am fixt not to part hence without him.  
For his redemption all my Patrimony,  
If need be, I am ready to forgo  
And quit: not wanting him, I shall want nothing.

Chor: Fathers are wont to lay up for thir Sons,  
Thou for thy Son art bent to lay out all;  
Sons wont to nurse thir Parents in old age,  
Thou in old age car'st how to nurse thy Son,

Made older then thy age through eye-sight lost.

Man: It shall be my delight to tend his eyes, 1490  
And view him sitting in the house, enobl'd  
With all those high exploits by him atchiev'd,  
And on his shoulders waving down those locks,  
That of a Nation arm'd the strength contain'd:  
And I perswade me God had not permitted  
His strength again to grow up with his hair  
Garrison'd round about him like a Camp  
Of faithful Souldiery, were not his purpose  
To use him further yet in some great service,  
Not to sit idle with so great a gift 1500  
Useless, and thence ridiculous about him.  
And since his strength with eye-sight was not lost,  
God will restore him eye-sight to his strength.

Chor: Thy hopes are not ill founded nor seem vain  
Of his delivery, and thy joy thereon  
Conceiv'd, agreeable to a Fathers love,  
In both which we, as next participate.

Man: I know your friendly minds and — O what noise!  
Mercy of Heav'n what hideous noise was that!  
Horribly loud unlike the former shout. 1510

Chor: Noise call you it or universal groan  
As if the whole inhabitation perish'd,  
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that noise,  
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.

Man: Of ruin indeed methought I heard the noise,  
Oh it continues, they have slain my Son.

Chor: Thy Son is rather slaying them, that outcry



From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.

Man: Some dismal accident it needs must be;  
What shall we do, stay here or run and see? 1520

Chor: Best keep together here, lest running thither  
We unawares run into dangers mouth.  
This evil on the Philistines is fall'n  
From whom could else a general cry be heard?  
The sufferers then will scarce molest us here,  
From other hands we need not much to fear.  
What if his eye-sight (for to Israels God  
Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,  
He now be dealing dole among his foes,  
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way? 1530

Man: That were a joy presumptuous to be thought.

Chor: Yet God hath wrought things as incredible  
For his people of old; what hinders now?

Man: He can I know, but doubt to think he will;  
Yet Hope would fain subscribe, and tempts Belief.  
A little stay will bring some notice hither.

Chor: Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner;  
For evil news rides post, while good news baits.  
And to our wish I see one hither speeding,  
An Ebrew, as I guess, and of our Tribe. 1540

Mess: O whither shall I run, or which way flie  
The sight of this so horrid spectacle  
Which earst my eyes beheld and yet behold;  
For dire imagination still persues me.  
But providence or instinct of nature seems,

Or reason though disturb'd, and scarce consulted  
To have guided me aright, I know not how,  
To thee first reverend Manoa, and to these  
My Countreymen, whom here I knew remaining,  
As at some distance from the place of horror, 1550  
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

Man: The accident was loud, & here before thee  
With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not,  
No Preface needs, thou seest we long to know.

Mess: It would burst forth, but I recover breath  
And sense distract, to know well what I utter.

Man: Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

Mess: Gaza yet stands, but all her Sons are fall'n,  
All in a moment overwhelm'd and fall'n.

Man: Sad, but thou knowst to Israelites not saddest 1560  
The desolation of a Hostile City.

Mess: Feed on that first, there may in grief be surfet.

Man: Relate by whom.

Mess: By Samson.

Man: That still lessens  
The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

Mess: Ah Manoa I refrain, too suddenly  
To utter what will come at last too soon;  
Lest evil tidings with too rude irruption  
Hitting thy aged ear should pierce too deep.

Man: Suspense in news is torture, speak them out.

Mess: Then take the worst in brief, Samson is dead. 1570

Man: The worst indeed, O all my hope's defeated  
To free him hence! but death who sets all free  
Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.  
What windy joy this day had I conceiv'd  
Hopeful of his Delivery, which now proves  
Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring  
Nipt with the lagging rear of winters frost.  
Yet e're I give the rains to grief, say first,  
How dy'd he? death to life is crown or shame.  
All by him fell thou say'st, by whom fell he, 1580  
What glorious band gave Samson his deaths wound?

Mess: Unwounded of his enemies he fell.

Man: Wearied with slaughter then or how? explain.

Mess: By his own hands.

Man: Self-violence? what cause  
Brought him so soon at variance with himself  
Among his foes?

Mess: Inevitable cause  
At once both to destroy and be destroy'd;  
The Edifice where all were met to see him  
Upon thir heads and on his own he pull'd.

Man: O lastly over-strong against thy self! 1590  
A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge.  
More than anough we know; but while things yet  
Are in confusion, give us if thou canst,  
Eye-witness of what first or last was done,  
Relation more particular and distinct.

Mess: Occasions drew me early to this City,  
 And as the gates I enter'd with Sun-rise,  
 The morning Trumpets Festival proclaim'd  
 Through each high street: little I had dispatch't  
 When all abroad was rumour'd that this day 1600  
 Samson should be brought forth to shew the people  
 Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games;  
 I sorrow'd at his captive state, but minded  
 Not to be absent at that spectacle.  
 The building was a spacious Theatre  
 Half round on two main Pillars vaulted high,  
 With seats where all the Lords and each degree  
 Of sort, might sit in order to behold,  
 The other side was op'n, where the throng  
 On banks and scaffolds under Skie might stand; 1610  
 I among these aloof obscurely stood.  
 The Feast and noon grew high, and Sacrifice  
 Had fill'd thir hearts with mirth, high chear, & wine,  
 When to thir sports they turn'd. Immediately  
 Was Samson as a public servant brought,  
 In thir state Livery clad; before him Pipes  
 And Timbrels, on each side went armed guards,  
 Both horse and foot before him and behind  
 Archers, and Slingers, Cataphracts and Spears.  
 At sight of him the people with a shout 1620  
 Rifted the Air clamouring thir god with praise,  
 Who had made thir dreadful enemy thir thrall.  
 He patient but undaunted where they led him.  
 Came to the place, and what was set before him  
 Which without help of eye, might be assay'd,  
 To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still perform'd  
 All with incredible, stupendious force,  
 None daring to appear Antagonist.  
 At length for intermission sake they led him



Between the pillars; he his guide requested 1630  
 (For so from such as nearer stood we heard)  
 As over-tir'd to let him lean a while  
 With both his arms on those two massie Pillars  
 That to the arched roof gave main support.  
 He unsuspecting led him; which when Samson  
 Felt in his arms, with head a while enclin'd,  
 And eyes fast fixt he stood, as one who pray'd,  
 Or some great matter in his mind revolv'd.  
 At last with head erect thus cryed aloud,  
 Hitherto, Lords, what your commands impos'd 1640  
 I have perform'd, as reason was, obeying,  
 Not without wonder or delight beheld.  
 Now of my own accord such other tryal  
 I mean to shew you of my strength, yet greater;  
 As with amaze shall strike all who behold.  
 This utter'd, straining all his nerves he bow'd,  
 As with the force of winds and waters pent,  
 When Mountains tremble, those two massie Pillars  
 With horrible convulsion to and fro,  
 He tugg'd, he shook, till down they came and drew 1650  
 The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder  
 Upon the heads of all who sate beneath,  
 Lords, Ladies, Captains, Councillors, or Priests,  
 Thir choice nobility and flower, not only  
 Of this but each Philistian City round  
 Met from all parts to solemnize this Feast.  
 Samson with these immixt, inevitably  
 Pulld down the same destruction on himself;  
 The vulgar only scap'd who stood without.

Chor: O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious! 1660  
 Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd  
 The work for which thou wast foretold  
 To Israel and now ly'st victorious

Among thy slain self-kill'd  
Not willingly, but tangl'd in the fold  
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd  
Thee with thy slaughter'd foes in number more  
Then all thy life had slain before.

SemiChor: While thir hearts were jocund and sublime  
Drunk with Idolatry, drunk with Wine, 1670  
And fat regorg'd of Bulls and Goats,  
Chaunting thir Idol, and preferring  
Before our living Dread who dwells  
In Silo his bright Sanctuary:  
Among them he a spirit of phrenzie sent,  
Who hurt thir minds,  
And urg'd them on with mad desire  
To call in hast for thir destroyer;  
They only set on sport and play  
Unweetingly importun'd 1680  
Thir own destruction to come speedy upon them.  
So fond are mortal men  
Fall'n into wrath divine,  
As thir own ruin on themselves to invite,  
Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,  
And with blindness internal struck.

Chor: But he though blind of sight,  
Despis'd and thought extinguish't quite,  
With inward eyes illuminated  
His fierie vertue rouz'd 1690  
From under ashes into sudden flame,  
And as an ev'ning Dragon came,  
Assailant on the perched roosts,  
And nests in order rang'd  
Of tame villatic Fowl; but as an Eagle  
His cloudless thunder bolted on thir heads.

So vertue giv'n for lost,  
Deprest, and overthrown, as seem'd,  
Like that self-begott'n bird  
In the Arabian woods embost, 1700  
That no second knows nor third,  
And lay e're while a Holocaust,  
From out her ashie womb now teem'd  
Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most  
When most unactive deem'd,  
And though her body die, her fame survives,  
A secular bird ages of lives.

Man: Come, come, no time for lamentation now,  
Nor much more cause, Samson hath quit himself  
Like Samson, and heroicly hath finish'd 1710  
A life Heroic, on his Enemies  
Fully reveng'd, hath left them years of mourning,  
And lamentation to the Sons of Caphtor  
Through all Philistian bounds. To Israel  
Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them  
Find courage to lay hold on this occasion,  
To himself and Fathers house eternal fame;  
And which is best and happiest yet, all this  
With God not parted from him, as was feard,  
But favouring and assisting to the end. 1720  
Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,  
Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair,  
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.  
Let us go find the body where it lies  
Sok't in his enemies blood, and from the stream  
With lavers pure and cleansing herbs wash off  
The clotted gore. I with what speed the while  
(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)  
Will send for all my kindred, all my friends 1730

To fetch him hence and solemnly attend  
With silent obsequie and funeral train  
Home to his Fathers house: there will I build him  
A Monument, and plant it round with shade  
Of Laurel ever green, and branching Palm,  
With all his Trophies hung, and Acts enroll'd  
In copious Legend, or sweet Lyric Song.  
Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,  
And from his memory inflame thir breasts  
To matchless valour, and adventures high: 1740  
The Virgins also shall on feastful days  
Visit his Tomb with flowers, only bewailing  
His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,  
From whence captivity and loss of eyes.

Chor: All is best, though we oft doubt,  
What th' unsearchable dispose  
Of highest wisdom brings about,  
And ever best found in the close.  
Oft he seems to hide his face,  
But unexpectedly returns 1750  
And to his faithful Champion hath in place  
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns  
And all that band them to resist  
His uncontroulable intent,  
His servants he with new acquist  
Of true experience from this great event  
With peace and consolation hath dismiss,  
And calm of mind all passion spent.

The End.



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## APPENDIX

Specimen of Milton's spelling, from the Cambridge  
autograph  
manuscript.

## ON TIME

(Set on a clock case)

Fly-envious Time till thou run out thy race  
call on the lazie leaden-stepping howres  
whose speed is but the heauey plummetts pace  
& glut thy selfe wth what thy womb deuoures  
Wch is no more then what is false & vaine  
& meerly mortall drosse  
so little is our losse  
so little is thy gaine  
for when as each thing bad thou hast entomb'd  
& last of all thy greedie selfe consum'd 10  
then long Aeternity shall greet our blisse  
wth an individuall kisse  
and Joy shall overtake us as a flood  
when every thing yt is sincerely good  
& pfectly diuine  
with Truth, & Peace, & Love shall ever shine  
about the supreme throne  
of him t' whose happy-making sight alone  
when once our heav'nly-guided soule shall clime  
then all this earthie grossnesse quit 20  
attir'd wth starres wee shall for ever sit  
Triumphing over Death, & Chance, & thee O Time.







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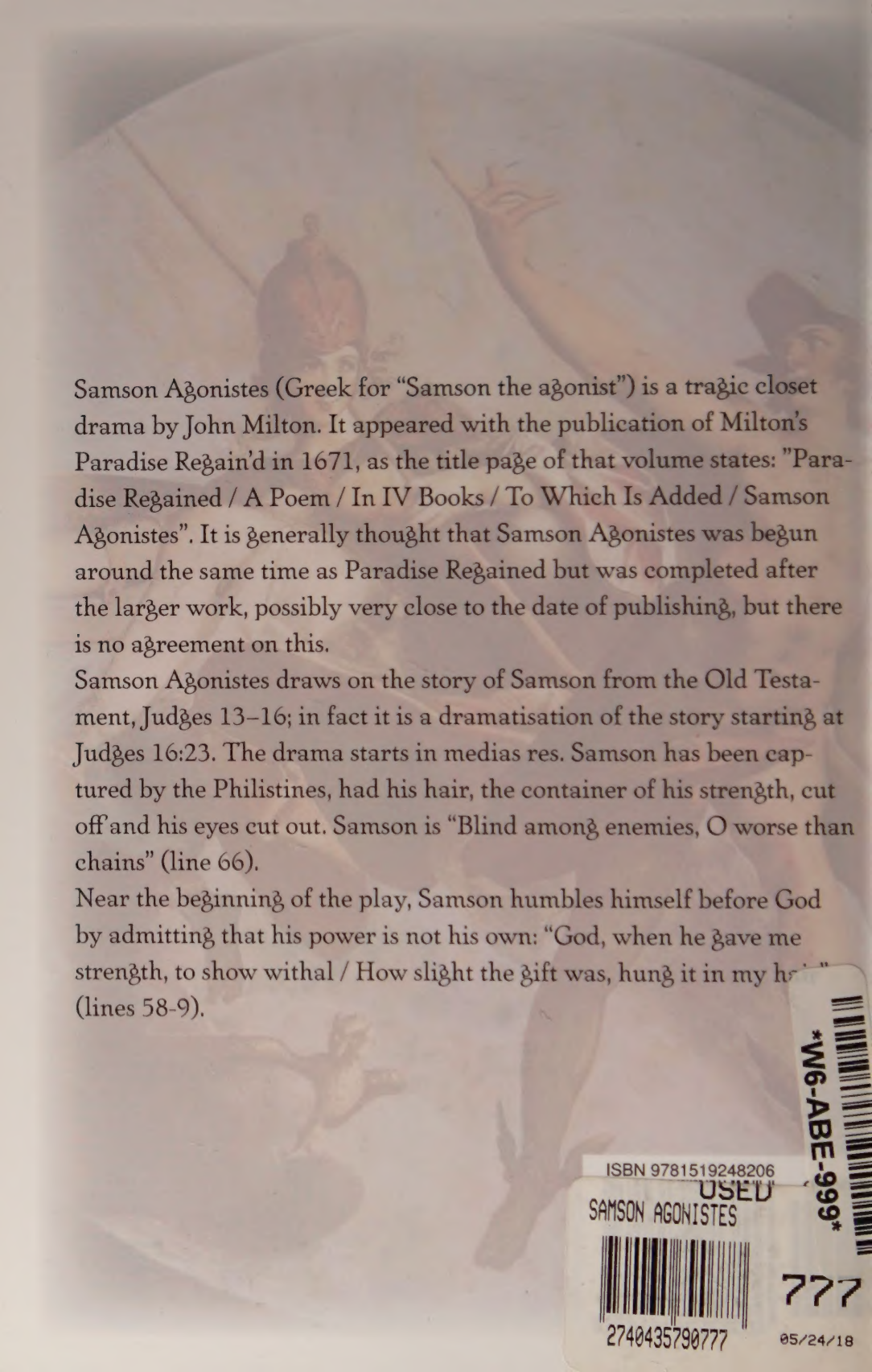
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A faint, sepia-toned illustration of the biblical story of Samson and Delilah serves as the background for the text. It depicts Samson, a muscular man with long hair, being led by Delilah, a woman in a red dress, towards a large rock. Other figures are visible in the background, including a man in a blue robe and a woman in a red dress. The scene is set in a room with a large window.

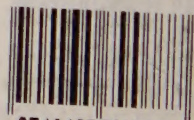
Samson Agonistes (Greek for “Samson the agonist”) is a tragic closet drama by John Milton. It appeared with the publication of Milton’s *Paradise Regain’d* in 1671, as the title page of that volume states: “*Paradise Regain’d / A Poem / In IV Books / To Which Is Added / Samson Agonistes*”. It is generally thought that *Samson Agonistes* was begun around the same time as *Paradise Regain’d* but was completed after the larger work, possibly very close to the date of publishing, but there is no agreement on this.

*Samson Agonistes* draws on the story of Samson from the Old Testament, Judges 13–16; in fact it is a dramatisation of the story starting at Judges 16:23. The drama starts in medias res. Samson has been captured by the Philistines, had his hair, the container of his strength, cut off and his eyes cut out. Samson is “Blind among enemies, O worse than chains” (line 66).

Near the beginning of the play, Samson humbles himself before God by admitting that his power is not his own: “God, when he gave me strength, to show withal / How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair” (lines 58–9).

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SAMSON AGONISTES



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